

## Cucumber and lettuce vichyssoise

*Light, delicate and pretty, this chilled soup - a take on the classic vichyssoise - is a great way to start a summer meal. You can also make a deep green version with spinach instead of the lettuce.*

### Serves 6

50g butter

2 leeks, trimmed (white and pale green part only), washed and sliced, or 1 large onion, sliced

1 large, floury potato (about 250g), peeled and cut into large chunks

1 litre vegetable stock

2 cucumbers, peeled and cubed

2 Little Gem or butterhead lettuces, washed and shredded

3 tbsp double cream or crème fraîche, plus a little extra to finish

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

### For the croutons

4 tbsp rapeseed or olive oil

4 slices of bread, crusts removed, cut into cubes to finish

Chopped chives

Melt the butter in a large pan over a medium-low heat. Add the leeks or onion, cover and sweat gently for about 10 minutes, until soft. Add the potato and stock. Bring to the boil, then simmer for about 10 minutes, until the potato is almost cooked. Add the cubed cucumbers and shredded lettuce, return to the boil and simmer for a further 4 minutes.

Fish out the potato chunks and rub them through a sieve, mouli or potato ricer into a large bowl (whizzing them in a blender would make the soup gluey). Purée everything else in a blender, add to the sieved potato and stir well. Stir in the cream or crème fraîche and season with salt and pepper. Leave to cool completely, then chill for a couple of hours.

Meanwhile, make the croutons. Heat the oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat. Add the bread and fry, turning often, for a few minutes, until golden brown. Leave to cool.

Serve the chilled soup topped with a swirl of cream or crème fraîche, chopped chives and the croutons.







## The vegiflette toastie

*My very easy tartiflette toastie, which appears in River Cottage Every Day, was inspired by the classic, rich and greedy Swiss mountain dish of cheese, ham, cream and spuds. This is an equally irresistible, meat-free version. The classic cheese for a tartiflette is Reblochon, but Camembert, Stinking Bishop and other well-flavoured 'washed rind' cheeses all work well. And, frankly, so do most goat's cheeses and even Cheddar. Indulgent, creamy, cheesy combinations like this are well-complemented by a few bitter salad leaves, and here I've actually made them an integral part of the toastie topping.*

### Serves 2

*2 tbsp rapeseed or olive oil*

*2 smallish, cold, cooked potatoes, thickly sliced*

*8-10 leaves of chicory, radicchio or other bitter salad leaf, roughly sliced*

*2-3 tbsp double cream or crème fraîche*

*2 thick slices of sourdough or other robust bread*

*About 50g (3-4 slices) cheese (see above)*

*Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper*

Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Add the potatoes and cook for a few minutes, turning every now and then, until starting to turn golden. Add the sliced chicory or other salad leaves and cook for a minute or so, until they are starting to wilt.

Add the cream and let it bubble and reduce for a minute or two, then season with salt and pepper to taste.

Preheat the grill and toast the bread lightly. Heap the mixture from the pan on to the toast. Lay the cheese slices on top and grill until bubbling. Serve straight away.



## Dhal

*A simple, red lentil dhal is such a great complement to so many vegetable dishes – not just curries or biryanis, pakoras or bhajis, but even simple fare such as shredded, stir-fried greens and a scoop of rice. It's a delicious way to add protein to a veg-based meal too. This easy but authentic example is based on a recipe from the wonderful Indian chef Udit Sarkhel.*

### Serves 4

250g red lentils

1 tsp ground turmeric

½ tsp fine sea salt

2 tbsp sunflower oil

1 tsp cumin seeds

1 onion, halved and thinly sliced

### To finish (optional)

*A small bunch of parsley or coriander,  
or a couple of sprigs of mint,  
roughly chopped*

Put the lentils in a pan with 800ml cold water and bring to the boil. Skim off any scum, then stir in the turmeric and salt. Lower the heat and simmer, uncovered, for about 15 minutes, stirring or whisking vigorously every now and then, until the lentils have broken down completely and you have a purée – the consistency of a thick soup or thin porridge. You can whisk in a little hot water from a just-boiled kettle if you need to thin it a bit. Keep warm in the pan.

When the dhal is just about done, heat the sunflower oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the cumin seeds and fry for a couple of minutes until browned and fragrant. Add the onion and fry fairly briskly for 5-10 minutes until golden brown, even just a smidge burnt.

Tip the mixture on to the hot lentils in the pan, cover and leave for 5 minutes, then stir in the onions and cumin. Taste and adjust the seasoning. This is very good with coriander, parsley or mint sprinkled on top – but that's not essential.







#### 4. Main dishes

## Mushroom ragout with soft polenta

*This is very easy to put together, and pretty quick too. Use a mix of well-flavoured mushrooms, such as chestnut, portabellini and big, flat, dark-gilled varieties, adding wild or exotic mushrooms if you have some to hand.*

### Serves 4

#### For the polenta

400ml milk

1 bay leaf

A sprig of thyme

A few peppercorns

½ onion and/or 2 garlic cloves, bashed

150g quick-cook polenta

20g butter

1 tsp finely chopped rosemary

20g Parmesan, hard goat's cheese  
or other well-flavoured hard cheese,  
finely grated

#### For the ragout

2 tbs rapeseed or olive oil

A large knob of butter

650g mushrooms, thickly sliced

1 large garlic clove, finely chopped

A few sprigs of thyme, leaves only,  
chopped

150ml red wine

150ml vegetable or mushroom stock

Sea salt and freshly ground  
black pepper

#### To serve (optional)

A trickle of top-notch olive oil

Extra Parmesan or other hard  
cheese, shaved

For the polenta, put the milk and 400ml water into a saucepan. Add the bay leaf, thyme, peppercorns and onion/garlic. Bring to just below the boil, then set aside to infuse for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the ragout. Heat 1 tablespoon oil and half the butter in a large, wide frying pan over a medium heat. Add half the mushrooms and some salt and pepper and turn the heat up high. Cook, stirring often, to encourage the mushrooms to release their juices. Continue to cook until most of the juices have evaporated and the mushrooms are starting to concentrate and caramelize. Add half the garlic and thyme and cook for a minute more, then tip the contents of the pan out on to a plate and set aside.

Repeat with the remaining mushrooms, using the rest of the garlic and thyme. Return the first batch of mushrooms to the pan. Add the wine and stock, reduce the heat and simmer for about 15 minutes until the liquid has reduced by about half. Check the seasoning.

To cook the polenta, strain the infused milk and water into a clean pan (or just scoop out the flavourings with a slotted spoon, as I do). Bring to a simmer, then pour in the polenta in a thin stream, stirring as you do so. Stir until the mix is smooth and then let it return to a simmer. Cook for just 1 minute, then remove from the heat. Stir in the butter, rosemary and cheese, then season generously with salt and pepper (adding at least ¼ teaspoon salt).

Immediately scoop the polenta into warmed dishes, top with the juicy mushroom ragout and serve, with an extra trickle of best olive oil and a few slivers of shaved cheese, if you like.







## Oven-roasted roots frittata

*This is a great way to use up odds and ends of fresh veg, and leftovers too. You can use more or less whatever you fancy from the list, though I do think some kind of onion is essential. As the egg is poured straight into the roasting dish full of hot veg, you don't need to fry this frittata at all, but it helps to have a heavy ceramic or cast-iron dish, which retains the heat well. And the eggs should be at room temperature, not cold from the fridge.*

### Serves 4-6

*About 600g mixed winter veg, such as shallots or onions, carrots, squash or pumpkin, parsnip, celeriac, beetroot, potatoes*

*1 large garlic clove, finely chopped*

*3 tbs rapeseed or olive oil*

*7 large or 8 medium eggs*

*A handful of mixed herbs, such as curly parsley, chives and thyme, finely chopped*

*About 20g Parmesan, hard goat's cheese or other well-flavoured hard cheese, grated*

*Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper*

Preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas Mark 5. Meanwhile, prepare your chosen veg: peel shallots or onions and quarter or thickly slice; peel carrots and cut into 5mm slices; peel squash or pumpkin, deseed and cut into 2-3cm cubes; peel parsnip, celeriac and beetroot and cut into 1-2cm cubes; cut potatoes into 1-2cm cubes.

Put all the veg into an ovenproof dish, about 23cm square. Add the garlic, oil and plenty of salt and pepper and toss well. Roast for about 40 minutes, stirring halfway through, until the veg are all tender and starting to caramelise in places.

Beat the eggs together with the chopped herbs and some more salt and pepper. Take the dish from the oven, pour the egg evenly over the veg and scatter over the grated cheese. Return to the oven for 10-15 minutes until the egg is all set and the top is starting to colour. If your oven has a grill, you can use that to accelerate the browning of the top.

Leave to cool slightly, then slide the frittata out on to a plate or board. Serve warm or cold. Perfect lunchbox fare...







## Baby carrot and broad bean risotto

*This is a perfect summer supper dish: tender baby carrots and bittersweet broad beans wrapped in a creamy, delicate risotto.*

### Serves 4

*1 tbsp rapeseed or olive oil*

*40g butter*

*1 large onion, finely chopped*

*About 800ml vegetable stock*

*200g risotto rice*

*100ml dry white wine*

*250-300g baby carrots, scrubbed and halved or quartered lengthways*

*150g baby broad beans*

*20g Parmesan, hard goat's cheese or other well-flavoured hard cheese, finely grated*

*A handful of flat-leaf parsley, chopped*

*Sea salt and freshly ground pepper*

*Rapeseed or extra virgin olive oil, to serve*

Heat the oil and 25g butter in a large pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and fry gently for 8-10 minutes, until softened. Meanwhile, bring the stock to a simmer, then keep over a very low heat.

Stir the rice into the onion, and cook for a minute or two, then stir again. Add the wine and bring to a simmer. Cook for a few minutes, stirring from time to time, until the wine is absorbed.

Now add the hot stock, about a quarter at a time, making sure each addition has been absorbed before you add the next. Keep the risotto simmering and stir frequently. It should take 20-25 minutes for the stock to be absorbed and for the rice to be cooked but still al dente. Add the carrots when the rice has been cooking for about 12 minutes; put the broad beans in just a couple of minutes before the rice is done.

When the rice and veg are cooked, turn off the heat. Scatter the cheese and dot the remaining butter over the risotto, then cover and leave for a couple of minutes. Now stir the melted cheese and butter into the risotto with most of the parsley and salt and pepper to taste.

Divide the risotto between warmed bowls. Scatter over the remaining parsley, trickle over a little oil and add a grinding of pepper to serve.

## Roasted aubergine 'boats'

*This is a really simple but delicious way to cook aubergines. Usually I serve them with fresh mint and yoghurt, but I've also tried smearing them with a little home-made pesto, which is lovely. To make a meal of them, serve alongside a simple couscous salad, or just a green salad and some hot flatbreads.*

### Serves 2-4

2 large aubergines (about 700g)

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

2-3 pinches dried chilli flakes or  
½-1 large red chilli, deseeded and  
finely chopped

4-5 tablespoons olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground  
black pepper

### To serve

4-6 tablespoons thick, plain  
(full-fat) yoghurt, plus about  
8 mint leaves, shredded

or

2-3 tablespoons pesto

Preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas Mark 5. Cut the aubergines in half lengthways. Using a small, sharp knife, make a series of deep slashes diagonally across the flesh, going about two-thirds of the way into the flesh, but not right through to the skin. You want to end up with 6-10 slashes, 1-2cm apart, depending on the size of your aubergines.

Mix the garlic and chilli with 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Hold one aubergine half in your hand and squeeze it from side to side so the slashes open up a little. Spoon some of the garlic and chilli oil over the aubergine with a teaspoon, using the back of the spoon to work the oil down into the slashes. Repeat with the other halves.

Put the aubergine halves, flesh side up, in a roasting dish. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then trickle over a little more olive oil - there should be little or no un-oiled flesh showing on each aubergine half. Roast in the oven for about 50 minutes, or until a deep golden brown and considerably reduced in size.

Leave the aubergines to cool slightly. Serve them hot or warm, either dabbed with yoghurt and sprinkled with mint and a touch more salt, or smeared with a little pesto.







## 8. Main dishes



### Macaroni peas

*Peas and pasta with bacon or ham is a classic combination. In this dish (inspired by a lovely Nigella Lawson risotto recipe), Parmesan gives the desired salty-savoury note. Some of the peas remain whole, to give a pleasing, pop-in-the-mouth texture; the rest are blitzed to form a creamy pea sauce.*

#### Serves 4

500g peas (fresh or frozen) or petits pois

300g small macaroni, or smallish pasta shapes such as orecchiette or fusilli, or even risoni

50g butter

1 garlic clove, chopped

25g Parmesan, hard goat's cheese or other well-flavoured hard cheese, coarsely grated, plus extra to serve

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Shredded basil or flat-leaf parsley, to serve (optional)

Put a large pan of well-salted water on to boil, so that you're ready to cook the pasta while the sauce is coming together.

Put the peas in a pan, cover with water, bring to the boil and simmer until tender – just a couple of minutes for frozen or very tender fresh peas, longer for older fresh peas.

When the peas are almost cooked, add the pasta to the pan of boiling water and cook until al dente.

Meanwhile, melt the butter in a small pan over a low heat and add the garlic. Let it cook gently for just a couple of minutes, without colouring, then remove from the heat.

Drain the peas, reserving the cooking water. Put about half of them in a blender with 6 tablespoons of the cooking water, the butter and garlic, and the grated cheese. Blitz to a smooth, loose purée, adding a little more water if needed. Combine with the whole peas and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Drain the pasta as soon as it is ready and toss immediately with the hot pea sauce. Serve topped with plenty of ground black pepper and more grated Parmesan. Shredded basil or chopped flat-leaf parsley is a good, but by no means essential, finishing touch



## Celery gratin

*It's easy to think of celery as a mere 'flavouring' vegetable, crucial to soups and stocks, but not a star in its own right. This deeply flavoured dish shows how delicious it can be when given centre stage. Try it with dressed lentils or a simple frittata.*

### Serves 4

1 head of celery

1 bay leaf

1 sprig of thyme

25g butter

About 100ml double cream

75g breadcrumbs

30g Parmesan, Gruyère, hard goat's cheese or other well-flavoured hard cheese, finely grated

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 160°C/Gas Mark 3. Break the celery into stalks, and put aside the outer stalks if they look coarse, or a bit hollow - to use for stock ([see page 130](#)). Cut any leaves from the remaining stalks and save these for stock too (they would go brown in the oven). Cut all the sticks into 10cm lengths.

Put the celery into a shallow ovenproof dish and tuck the bay and thyme among the stems. Pour over 3 tablespoons water, dot over the butter and sprinkle on some salt and pepper. Cover with foil and bake for about 40 minutes or until the celery is tender. Take the dish out of the oven and turn the setting up to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.

Discard the bay and thyme and carefully pour off the liquid from the celery dish into a jug. Add enough cream to make up to 150ml and whisk together. Taste and add more salt and pepper if needed, then pour back over the celery in the dish.

Mix the breadcrumbs with the grated cheese, sprinkle over the celery and return to the oven for 15-20 minutes, until the crumb topping is golden brown and crispy. Grind over some black pepper and serve.







## Patatas bravas “

Quinoa is a highly nutritious little seed that makes a nice alternative to rice or couscous (in fact, you can substitute it for those ingredients in all manner of recipes). I love it with tender courgettes, sweet onions and crunchy pine nuts in this simple supper dish. *For a more wintry version, see the variation below.*

### Serves 4-6

1kg waxy or new potatoes, cut into 3cm cubes

5 tbsp olive or rapeseed oil

Flaky sea salt

### For the spicy tomato sauce

2 tbsp olive or rapeseed oil

1 onion, finely chopped

A handful of thyme sprigs, leaves only, chopped

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 small, fairly hot red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

400g tin plum tomatoes, chopped, any stalky ends and skin removed

2 tsp sweet paprika

A pinch of sugar

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

### To finish

A handful of parsley, roughly chopped

This is a classic Spanish tapa that works beautifully with a selection of other little dishes – chunks of frittata, simple salads, olives, dips etc – but it also makes a great starter in its own right. Add an extra chilli if you want more heat. And if you have any sauce left over, save it to toss through hot pasta.

First make the sauce. Heat the 2 tablespoons oil in a saucepan over a medium-low heat. Add the onion with the thyme and sweat until softened and translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and chilli and cook, stirring, for a minute.

Now add the tomatoes with their juice, paprika, sugar and some salt and pepper. Simmer for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally and breaking up the tomatoes with a wooden spoon, until you have a nice, rich, piquant tomato sauce. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary and keep the sauce warm.

Bring a large pan of water to the boil, salt well and add the potatoes. Bring back to the boil and cook for 5-8 minutes, until on the firm side of tender; ie not quite done. Drain in a colander and leave to steam for a few minutes. Gently tip on to a clean tea towel and pat dry.

Warm the 5 tablespoons oil in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat and sauté the potatoes for 10-15 minutes, until crisp and golden. Drain on kitchen paper, tip into a warmed dish and season with a scattering of sea salt.

Check the consistency of the tomato sauce and thin it with a splash of hot water if necessary, then pour over the potatoes. Scatter with chopped parsley and serve warm.

